

Urges Higher Funding for Older Americans Act

October 17, 2003

Dear Conferee:

As you determine FY 04 spending levels for the agencies under the conference committee's jurisdiction, the undersigned members of the Leadership Council of Aging Organizations (LCAO) request that you direct your attention to the aging services provided through the Older Americans Act (OAA) under the auspices of the Administration of Aging (AoA), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. We urge you to include the highest figures from H.R. 2660 and S. 1356 for all AoA programs and other programs that benefit our nation's older adult population.

OAA programs provide a wide range of home and community-based services that include home care, protective services, congregate and home-delivered meals, adult day care, transportation, case management, legal counseling and state long-term care ombudsman services. For over 30 years these services have successfully enhanced the ability of millions of older persons to live independently in their preferred environments, their homes and communities.

OAA funding, however, has not nearly kept pace with inflation and population growth. Even with efficient utilization of OAA funds, older adults in communities across the nation are on waiting lists for many essential supportive services, such as home-delivered meals and transportation. When the FY 04 appropriations process began earlier this year, the LCAO sought an increase of at least 10 percent for all Older Americans Act services to account for the growing senior population and an increased demand for services, which has been exacerbated further in the last several years by cutbacks in state Medicaid and community-services programs as a result of the fiscal crises states are facing.

In the aggregate, the House appropriations measure is more favorable to aging services. With the exception of Titles V, VI and VII and the Alzheimer's Initiative for which we seek the higher allocations in S.1356, the LCAO encourages you to use H.R.2660 as the baseline for determining FY 04 OAA program allocations. The LCAO strongly urges you to retain the entire \$13 million increase contained in H.R. 2660 for the National Family Caregiver Support Program, which helps states and communities provide a broad array of critical services to family caregivers. We also urge you to retain the language included in S.1356, which maintains states access to commodities and reiterates that Nutrition Services Incentive Program funds only be used for meals, not be subject to administrative transfer or match requirements.

The LCAO encourages your support of discretionary Title IV research and development funds, which play a vital role in enabling the Administration on Aging to support and encourage innovative programs. These funds would allow AoA to provide continued support for the newly implemented Aging and

Disability Resource Centers program, which helps seniors make informed long-term care decisions and serves as the entry point to the system, and the Prevention Programs for the Elderly, a public/private partnership to increase access for older people to programs that have proven to be effective in reducing the risk of disease, injury and disability.

We urge you to bring forward a Conference Report that demonstrates your recognition of the needs of the growing older citizens population and your commitment to maintaining a level of federal support that helps ensure their independence and well-being by funding OAA programs at no less than the higher appropriation level of the two measures being reconciled.

Sincerely,

AARP
Alliance for Retired Americans
Alzheimer's Association
American Association for International Aging
American Association of Homes and Services for the Aging
American Federation of Teachers Program on Retirement and Retirees
American Foundation for the Blind
American Society on Aging
Association for Gerontology and Human Development in Historically Black
Colleges and Universities
Association of Jewish Aging Services of North America
B'nai B'rith International
Eldercare America
Experience Works
FamiliesUSA
Gerontological Society of America
Gray Panthers
International Union, UAW
Meals on Wheels Association of America
National Academy of Elder Law Attorneys
National Association for Hispanic Elderly
National Association for Home Care and Hospice
National Association of Area Agencies on Aging
National Association of Nutrition and Aging Services Programs
National Association of Professional Geriatric Care Managers
National Association of Retired and Senior Volunteer Program Directors
National Association of Senior Companion Project Directors
National Association of State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Programs
National Association of State Units on Aging
National Caucus and Center on Black Aged
National Citizens' Coalition for Nursing Home Reform
National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare
National Council on the Aging
National Senior Citizens Law Center
OWL, the voice of midlife and older women

*United Jewish Communities
Volunteers of America*